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C O N F I D E N T I A L HILLAH 000016

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: NAJAF GOVERNOR SAYS MEHDI NEW IRAQI PM

CLASSIFIED BY: GARY ANDERSON, ACTING REGIONAL COORDINATOR, REO,
AL-HILLAH, STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is a SET Najaf cable.

[1](#)2. (C) Summary: Najaf Governor Assad Al-Taei told SET Najaf that the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA, ballot number 555) had agreed to nominate Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) Official Adel Abdul Mehdi as the new Prime Minister. Al-Taei said that Moqtada Al-Sadr had approved of the choice, and that the decision could be announced February 5. End summary.

[1](#)3. (C) Najaf Governor Assad Al-Taei, who is affiliated with SCIRI, told SET Najaf in a brief February 5 meeting that his party and the constituent members of the UIA had agreed to nominate Adel Abdul Mehdi, a high-ranking SCIRI official and current Vice President of Iraq, as the new Iraqi Prime Minister. The Governor said that the selection could be announced as soon as the afternoon of February 5.

[1](#)4. (C) When asked about the support of Moqtada Al-Sadr, widely rumored to be politically close to current PM Ibrahim Al-Ja'afari, for the selection, Al-Taei responded that Sadr had supported the choice. Al-Taei maintained that Sadr felt that Ja'afari had become an unreliable political ally and that Mehdi was the best that Sadr could hope for. Al-Taei offered that he expected no Sadrist violence or demonstrations as a result of the choice and its announcement.

[1](#)5. (C) Comment: As a high-ranking official in the center of the Shi'a Islamist political and clerical establishment, Al-Taei is likely to have some insight into the negotiations and decisions of the UIA. Still, information surrounding the negotiations for positions in the new Iraqi government should be considered extremely fluid and tentative at best. End Comment.

ANDERSON